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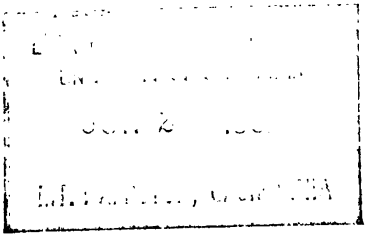
Supt of Pubs. Grant Theodore
Eberhart, 601 S. 6th St.,
San Jose 12, Calif., June
15, 1962.



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A Snuff-box Full of Trees

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A Snuff-box Full of Trees

& Some Apocryphal Essays

by

W. D. ELLWANGER

Author of "The Oriental Rug" and
"A Summer Snowflake"

New York:
Dodd, Mead & Company
1909

In Memory Of
Fred David Eberhart
U. S. Marine Corps
Saipan — June 16, 1944

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The Genesee Press
The Post Express Printing Company
Rochester, New York

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PS
3509
L69
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A Snuff-box Full of Trees

CALIFORNIA gave to the world in 1849 not only the most wondrous wealth known up to that time, but also the tallest trees that ever grew toward heaven. Somewhere in the early fifties G. H. Woodruff joined the throng of gold hunters and went West to seek his fortune. So far as is known he found no gold, but, as the story runs, after a year or more of disappointments, he found himself one day in the forest primeval, forlorn and disconsolate. He threw himself on the ground, and, yielding to despair, gazed up into the treetops for help or resignation. Above him towered the big trees of the world, the grand Giganteas. You may call them, as you please, Gigantea, Washingtonia, or Wellingtonia. Their generic name is an arbitrary one, and it is still a disputed question whether they were first found and named by an Englishman or an American. No worry of nomenclature disturbed Mr. Woodruff, but he knew trees. They had been part and par-

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cel of his education, and as he lay on his back and looked up into their glorious heights, he appreciated their grandeur and rejoiced in their beauty. Also he noticed that the squirrels were nibbling at the cones above him, and dropping some of the seed shells at his feet. He thought that these seeds might be propagated successfully, and gathered a number of them. These he put into a snuff-box and at the first opportunity sent them to Ellwanger & Barry, nurserymen, at Rochester, N. Y. The snuff-box came by pony express across the continent, and the express charges for the little packet were $25. The seeds were duly sown and propagated by Messrs. Ellwanger & Barry, as appears from a letter in which they said:

January 11, 1855.

We have already one box of the seed sowed in our rose house under glass, a nice temperature of about 50 to 60 degrees. If it will do well anywhere it must do there. We shall sow all in boxes under glass, as the plants will be less liable to damp and wither off. We have agreed to grow the plants on shares as proposed, but if you prefer to sell it you might name your price for it.

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More seeds were afterward gathered and sent and propagated, with results shown in a second letter:

January 26, 1856.

We did all in our power with them; some of the seeds never vegetated and some came slowly. They have been coming through the ground all summer. We have succeeded in obtaining about 4000 plants, all of which are out of danger, we think; they are all in pots, and as there is no demand yet for them in this country we have shipped 400 to England to be sold, and shall send more as needed. We intend to advertise them here this spring at $2 per plant.

So much for the finding of these seeds and their propagation. Their subsequent growth and development, and their dispersion from Rochester over all of Europe, make another chapter in their story. If it seems a far cry from these little potted pigmies to the giants of the forest, it is necessary only to turn to Messrs. Ellwanger & Barry's catalogue of 1857 for encouragement as to their possibilities. In that catalogue these plants were thus offered for sale: "Washingtonia Gigantea, the Celebrated Big Tree of Califor-

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nia; Wellingtonia of the English, and Sequoia of the French; one of the most majestic trees in the world. Specimens have been measured upward of 300 feet in height and thirty-two feet in diameter three feet from the ground. We think it will prove hardy here, as several specimens stood out unprotected last winter. Mr. Reid, of New Jersey, has also found it hardy with him. One dollar to two dollars."

But either this advertisement was too modest or the commendation too conservative, for the plants found few buyers here. Even in 1856 the growers had to look to foreign markets for the sale of the greatest native American industry, if a big tree of California, 300 feet high, may be so characterized. William Skirving, nurseryman, of Liverpool, England, bought the first hundred of the plants in that year. Later he bought 250 more, then again 500 and 500 and 500 and 500, making in all 2350. So the squirrel seeds began to take root and grow and spread in English soil. And Mr. Skirving's purchase proved profitable to him in more ways than one. For he has told that when the first invoice of plants arrived he was quite ill and con-

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fined to his bed. His head gardener was so impressed with the beauty of the plants that he brought a box of them for admiration to Mr. Skirving's bedside. The very sight of them, Mr. Skirving declared, made him a well man again. This was his own story to Mr. Ellwanger when the latter visited him, and the circumstances may go to prove that there is more healing balsam and resinous health in the evergreens of California than Bret Harte has ever dared to sing. Mr. Skirving went on to say that shortly afterward a certain duke whose estates were in Wales happened to call upon him. The duke had a fondness for conifers, as is characteristic of wealthy and exalted personages, it being well understood that far beyond roses and lilies and orchids and all the shrubs and trees that ever grew, a taste for conifers is the supreme refinement. It is the top note in the gamut of all songs of beauty and nature, whether people most love books or trees or pictures or porcelains or whatsoever it may be. The late Charles A. Dana, who knew most everything that was good, knew this also, and, it is said, loved his evergreens more than all his other treasures. But, be that as it may, in the course

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of conversation, the duke boasted to Mr. Skirving that he had recently made a find of a few plants of the Wellingtonia, for which he had paid two guineas apiece. These he bought at Veitch's, he of the Ampelopsis, to describe him familiarly, for surely the Ampelopsis Veitchii is a household word. Mr. Skirving promptly offered to sell the duke any number at one guinea, and the duke as quickly bought a hundred, which he planted in an avenue. If they have grown and thrived, as is said, they must make an imposing sight by this time.

Of the plants which Messrs. Ellwanger & Barry propagated, several hundred were also sent to a well-known English nurseryman, Thomas Rivers. Of the dispersion of these there is no trace. Other dukes and potentates may have purchased them. The following record, however, is interesting. It is quoted from the memoirs of Tennyson, recently published. In the first chapter of volume 2 the poet's son writes that the great event of 1864 was Garibaldi's visit to the Tennysons.

"My mother wrote in April," he says, "A. and I went out to fix a spot in our garden where the Wellingtonia should be planted by

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him (given to A. by the Duchess of Sutherland and raised by her from a cone that had been shot from a tree 300 feet high in California)."

Some of the circumstances are then told connected with the planting of the tree and the ceremonies attending it, as graced by Garibaldi's presence and favor. Many strangers were there, and "when the tree was planted they gave a shout." It is to be hoped that the shout was in honor of the tree itself, as well as for its sponsor or foster-father or either of its worthy namesakes.

So, from Mr. Woodruff's snuff-box have come almost all important specimens of the Gigantea in Europe and in the United States east of the Rocky mountains. You can find them in the botanical gardens in Bordeaux, at Kew, in Madrid, in Switzerland and elsewhere. There are one or two in Boston. Of the original propagation a group of seven fine specimens are growing in the home nursery grounds of Ellwanger & Barry. These trees are now about fifty feet high, and, except that our winter winds are sometimes unkind to them, and the heads of one or two show signs

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of baldness, they bear their years and honors well. They are somewhat shielded by neighboring firs, yet they doubtless miss the protection which favored them in their original habitat. But nothing can rob them of their dignity. So long as they live they will have a majesty of their own. They must have known and asserted their importance when they were hardly inches high in the rose house, for even then they had a fair money value, and in 1865 Ellwanger & Barry paid to Mr. Woodruff as his half profits for his seed gathering $1030.60.

It may be added that no similar large propagation of seed has been attempted here, or, if accomplished, would be likely to prove financially successful. Seed is now easily obtainable, but the plants would no longer be a novelty in the horticultural market.

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The Kingdom of Heaven

IN childhood, heaven seems to us only a wondrous sea into whose fathomless blue our eyes sink of a summer's day. Or, at night, we look up to it with greater awe, and dimly realize its impenetrable depths as a mere background to the shining stars.

Youth and young manhood, or womanhood, gave us less time for the consideration of the heavens. Matters of seeming greater importance called for our constant consideration.

It is only later in life or when some death comes to us and smites us as with a sudden blow that we bring up, shocked and stunned, and slowly begin to think.

The wife or husband dies, the brother or sister, the father or mother, the child, or the friend and right hand of our very life. Tears and memories are the first relief which nature gives, and hers is a most kindly, temporary comfort. But it lasts only for a little time, and often has its dangerous reactions.

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Philosophy or religion must be called upon for better and more lasting consolation.

The aid of philosophy will often prove effective and harden our hearts to the necessary evil. But it only cauterizes the wound, ruthlessly and cruelly, as with a hot iron. It does not soothe, assuage, or heal.

Let us consider if religion will do more for us, and let us ask ourselves some questions if we dare.

What is our first thought when the great loss comes and, as we will suppose, our best friend dies in the full power of his manhood? It is the unreality of it, the impossibility of it, and the utter, wanton waste of such a life. Rebellion at Providence is the first natural feeling, and then grief follows in its various stages and forms of expression. After that there is sure to come a most intense longing to see our friend just once more, to assure him of our lasting love, to explain this or that old misunderstanding, to do and say a thousand things which were left undone and unsaid while he was still with us. The pity of this is very sore, and the uselessness of our regrets makes keener the heart-ache.

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Does not religion come to our aid here? and does it not tell us that our friend is now in heaven, that the fullness of wisdom has come to him, and that he knows and understands? There is no need for our excuses or explanations. He has gained the knowledge of the very secrets of our heart.

This question may then arise: Has our friend gone at once to this heaven? or must his soul lie dormant until the final judgment day when the last of us shall be called to account? Without pausing to weigh and consider sectarian tenets on this subject and without attempting to explain or reconcile any scriptural differences on this point, it would seem that an immortal soul cannot suffer even a temporary death and must win its heaven as soon as it leaves its mortal body. And this is comforting, for it assures us that our friend not only knows and understands, but knows now, in the time of our remorse and sorrow. Our reconciliation is instant and absolute.

But the solace of our religion goes still farther, and says that our friend has only "gone before," that we may follow and meet again. The hope of heaven gives no greater com-

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fort than this, and no stronger incentive to so live, that we, too, may gain to it when we die, in our turn. Stevenson has most beautifully expressed this in one of his poems, of which this is but a verse:

> He is not dead, this friend,—not dead,—
> But in the path we mortals tread
> Got some few trifling steps ahead
> And nearer to the end.
> So, that you, too, once past the bend
> Shall meet again, as face to face, this friend
> You fancy dead.

Now comes that most momentous question at which we hesitate: How shall we meet our friend thus face to face? How shall we know him or find him? Our most natural, present earnest prayer is that we may meet him and greet him just as we knew him and loved him, not as an unimaginable angel, not as a being so celestial and spiritualized as to be altogether above our kith and kin and ken. This is the human cry, wrung from our human sorrow, which Stevenson caught and phrased for our comfort. But the Bible hardly warrants this form of consolation.

Saint Paul in his letter to the Corinthians writes: "But some man will say, How are the

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dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool! That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be. . . But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him. . . It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption;" and then follows all that this inspired apostle has so beautifully expressed as to the "body terrestrial" and "celestial."

This must be so. We shall never see our friend again in the same familiar form that we knew him here on earth.

The Bible proves this again in Christ's response to the question of the Sadducees: "Whose wife shall she be of the seven?" The answer was: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scripture or the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God."

If then, we shall meet again this friend, it needs must be on quite a different plane from that of our human, mundane existence. And if at first this seems an added sorrow and not a consolation, it is only because of the limitations of our present worldly thoughts. To

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quote from St. Paul once more: "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face—now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

That we love a man for his faults is not true. It is only a conventional expression. It is only the flattering unction which we lay to our souls that the flaws and frailties of another condone our own.

We ourselves must be changed in order to win to heaven and join our changed friends there. So stupendous a miracle cannot be wrought except under new and unknown conditions. But be these as they may, they need only purge from us the dross, the crudities, the sin of human life. They may still leave us of our mortal character "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," we are told to "think on these things." And what shall we think but that these qualities, these characteristics, these virtues must endure beyond the grave?

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So, I believe that we may hope to meet again our friend, much the same for all our mutual transformation and regeneration, but with all differences forgotten, all faults forgiven and our friendship firm fixed forever.

There is, perhaps, another disquieting thought: What will become of our friend in heaven? and what peace and happiness, what transports of delight will he find there to compensate him for his woes and troubles here on earth?

He will find there, as may be, a father, mother, wife, sister, or brother, gone before. Happy as such a reunion must be, happy even as the meeting for which we hope, how lonesome must his poor soul find itself among the myriads in heaven. In the communion of saints will our friend joy in meeting with the early Christian martyrs or the forgotten heroes of history of long ago? Would he not much more wish and wait for us?

What is this communion of saints in heaven? And how shall the elect of many tribes and nations and the foreordained of past and present centuries and the ages yet to come be gathered there?

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The only answer that occurs is that which Christ himself gave: "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you."

What this place may be, this mansion for each of us, our God only knows. Our most intense and spiritualized, rapt and religious thoughts and dreams can give no picture of it.

But even our little minds may grasp some idea of its possibilities if we will look up to the heavens at night, as we did in our childhood, and estimate the millions of worlds in the Milky Way. Can we not easily believe that our great Creator, as one of his plans for our eternal bliss, might prepare as our place among them a star, a whole world, a happy heaven of its own for every soul that he has chosen to call to him?

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The Egotism of the Earth

WHOEVER would approach the subject of astronomy may well heed the injunction to Moses: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." It is not for the casual reader or for the dreamy student, however sincere, that those great people, the astronomers of now and of yesterday and of a thousand years ago, have spread their records and fixed their facts. But from the proven wonders which they have taught us it may be permitted to a mere layman to seek some conclusions.

That any individual existing on this earth is egotistic, is most human. It is a part of our nature. Our personal individuality is so bred in the bone, so part of our flesh, that we call one phase of it the instinct of self preservation. No passion or power of ours is stronger. Yet, when we think of ourselves, each as one of the millions of inhabitants of this globe; when we consider what a puny part in its his-

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tory our little life plays, and how quickly our place is filled when we vacate it—what a vanity is our self esteem! Our self appreciation is laughable almost to pathos; and the personal abnegation, the national self sacrifice of the Japanese, seems no longer a marvelous thing. Theirs is, if not the better part, at least the truer appreciation of the individual.

But if our personal importance is so small a consideration, how much lower in insignificance do we sink if we consider the mass of us who inhabit this earth and our petty mundane affairs, as viewed in the light of the modern telescope. Let us look at ourselves.

The little wandering globe which we inhabit shrinks into insignificance when we compare it with the Sun, which controls our system, and which gives to us our heat, life and very existence. The Sun, so to say, is our Father in Heaven, our immediate God, without whose benignant rays this earth would be null and void.

To our same Sun, however, other planets like our own make obeisance and owe fealty.

Venus, the twin of the earth, Uranus, Neptune, Saturn, and Jupiter, those monsters of

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our solar system, pursue their proper courses round the Sun, and ought to teach us our littleness and humbleness.

But we poor earth worms say that this globe is inhabited, it has life upon it, it has vegetation, it has people; animal and human life. The moon has no life, except as the young and romancing astronomers tell, nor Mars, in spite of fiction. Nor do the astronomers admit that like conditions of atmosphere and gravitation allow of similar life to ours on the grander planets (Venus, perhaps, particularly excepted). Our laws of gravity, our limitations as to heat and cold, a thousand reasons, all preclude that the other planets, or their satellites, should be inhabited.

How weak is this argument! On our own earth how different are the forms of life, and to what tests of torrid and frigid zone and varying elements are they adapted. Does the orchid grow in the arctic circle? Could the polar bear live at the tropics? Does a fish survive out of its element? Does a man drown in the sea?

Life here on earth adapts itself to heat and cold, to atmosphere and to almost every con-

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dition. Why not in other worlds? It is no answer to say that such life must be different from ours. If it must be, it may be. There are a multitude of arguments to show that many of our solar planets or their satellites support life and all its possibilities and consequences.

But this is only the beginning of things, if we dare to consider, to open our eyes and to look through a telescope, real or imaginary. A glance at the heavens with a pair of opera glasses will reveal much more than the naked eye can see. How much more have the astronomers found with their modern lenses?

Our little tiny solar system is a mere doll, a plaything, in the minds of the astronomers. It is but the primer of knowledge, the A, B, C, to the learning of the wonders of the universe.

Keep in your mind for the moment our stupendous galaxy of worlds, as we think it, with Jupiter, Saturn, and Neptune, subject to our great Sun, and our little earth trailing in the rear. Then, let your eyes open and perceive the infinite extent of the worlds, which lie beyond our orbit and our ken.

Professor Newcomb has given us a most clear object lesson whereby we may picture the

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importance and the distances of the fixed stars, those "other worlds than ours."

Take a small farm in New York State, half a mile square. Put an apple in it, and then a mustard seed, forty feet away. Behold the simulacra of the Sun and the earth! Dot this plat with a pea, which is Jupiter, and a peppercorn, which is Saturn. Add a few assorted shot which will answer for Neptune, Venus, and Mars. This is the solar system in grand miniature. Where shall we locate the nearest fixed star on this imaginary map?

It is another apple, way out beyond and far beyond San Francisco. And that is the nearest fixed star. Forty feet separate the earth from the Sun, while thousands of miles mark the nearest limit of a star, in this comparison.

Do you question these figures and facts of the astronomers? They are easily proved, and one illustration is as good as another. Centuries ago six planets of our solar system were known and named. The days of the week gave them honor in various languages and in various countries. There were great astronomers in olden days, but they did not know Neptune or Uranus.

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The Egotism of the Earth

The story of Herschel's discovery of Uranus in 1781 reads like a fairy tale, as does all of Herschel's history. It is too good and too true to be spoiled by a mere allusion. It was by chance, nevertheless, that Herschel found Uranus and picked it out of the skies, as one might snatch a gold piece from the sands of the sea shore. But the consequences were far greater than the original discovery. The astronomers of that time no sooner knew of this new planet than they must need apply to it their most searching lenses and make their figures and computations as to its course and orbit. That was most surely done, and its movement observed and noted. It did not answer to the laws predicated for it, and which it should properly observe.

It swerved from the lines which the mathematicians proved to themselves it ought to follow. Were these astronomers wrong? Was their science at fault? No. Two brilliant men, Adams of Cambridge and Leverrier of Paris, at about the same time, made their observations and drew their conclusions. A disturbing cause must account for the divergence of the planet from its proper path, and this could

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be nothing else than some other planet as yet unknown, whose influence might attract Uranus from its normal course.

They carried out their theory to its legitimate conclusion, assumed this new planet of our solar system, which would explain Uranus's eccentricity, and, by the process of elimination, announced that in a certain portion of the heavens, at such and such a time our new planet would be found.

It *was* so found, at the hour fixed, and *Neptune*, one of the mammoths of the universe, was proven to us. It was discovered by pure mathematics, and is the triumph of astronomical calculation and exactness.

When we consider the *Sidereal* system, therefore, we may accept the astronomers' views almost as if we saw through their telescope with our own eyes, and had verified their figures by an expert mathematician.

Thus, we know that there exist, millions and millions of miles beyond our Sun, innumerable other suns. Every fixed star that we see in the shining heavens is another sun, presumably much greater, hotter and more important than our own.

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There can no more be life on these suns than on our own. But we can imagine no cause for their being, unless they also give heat, light, and all their consequences to their myriads of satellites and make life possible for innumerable other worlds.

Does the layman question the existence and infinity of these suns?

No proof is easier than that heretofore suggested, which a good opera glass affords. On a clear night the naked eye may find in the heavens such and so many stars. The most perfect count in the most favorable locations will disclose about five thousand. The opera glass will bring many others to our view, and increase our knowledge. A small telescope will add still more to our vision. Even in the time of Sir John Herschel no less than five million were claimed to be in sight.

The greater the power of the glass, the greater the galaxy shown to us; and the more we perfect our lenses and appliances the more and more millions are proven to our sight. And then comes modern telescopic photography, with its accumulation of perfect proofs, and lo! a myriad more of stars are shown to us,

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and heavenly marvels beyond understanding and almost beyond belief. There is no lack of stars to see. There is absolutely no limit to them. There is only the limitation of modern mechanism which prevents us from seeing *all* the stars. It is only the finite which prevents us from seeing the infinite. But the finite of mechanical science can only creep on to some advances. It is almost enough to expect of it to-day that it shows us the moon as if two hundred and forty miles away, instead of its real distance, a quarter of million miles from this earth.

There is one more answer for the simple-minded, who hesitates to accept the distances of the fixed stars as postulated by the astronomers. The problem is not so difficult, it is only a question of accuracy. Knowing the base line and the angle, it is child's play to calculate the height of a mountain; and with the stars, the problem is no less simple, except that by reason of their tremendous distances we lack the sufficient basis. The extreme orbit of the earth is our ultimate base, and that is admittedly a limitation in calculating infinite remoteness. But the approximate figures of

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the fixed stars as they are related to us, may be safely accepted by any but the more persistent astronomers. They will certainly suffice for the purposes of this article.

There is one more fact concerning the stars which must be considered in this long preamble. This concerns the velocity of light. Light takes a measurable time to travel, swift as it moves. In a summer thunder shower we see the lightning and later hear the crash of the thunder. The difference between sight and sound tells us how far away the lightning may be. Five seconds of time means a mile from the flash. In brief, light travels a million times as fast as sound. It will flash seven times around the earth in a second; and yet that which comes to us from the heavens takes an appreciable period. For example, eight minutes is needed for the sun's light to reach the earth. Jupiter's comes to us in half an hour. The nearest star is so much more remote, that its rays attain to us only as they blazed out years ago. The light of farther stars we see as of still longer past, a hundred, a thousand and even a million of years. It may humble us to realize, as a corollary to this, that the light of

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our globe is far, far too small to reach to any star. We are quite as unknown to them as is the light of their satellites to us.

And there is this astounding thought that many of the bright or fainter stars which we view in the sky to-night may long since have burned out and become extinct, while their beams are still traveling toward us.

All of which leads to this consideration. If we imagine a person, a power, a being, a God, omnipresent as He must be—from the view point of the various stars—He must see and know the history of this earth from its beginning until to-day. Every item of our past, however minute, is still in continuous view and in perpetual remembrance.

This is a mere suggestion of what astronomy tells us; it leads our imagination into possibilities as deep as the vault of heaven itself. Lest we drown ourselves in that, let us hasten to some conclusion from our premises. Let us grasp even at a straw before we sink.

If the primer of astronomy proves anything it tells us that our earth is a mere atom in the universe. It gives us fair reason to believe that there are countless worlds, other than ours,

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capable of supporting life, and inhabited or inhabitable. However widely the old school and new school of astronomers may differ on this point, there is no consensus of opinion and one is free to philosophise on the subject as one will. Astronomy certainly shows us how a myriad of systems, like to our little world and its surroundings, exist and have their being, their place and their regular course in a glorious celestial plan. Can anyone doubt that an omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal force rules and regulates this host of worlds? Can anyone doubt that there is a God? Whatever this God may be, whatever his personality, whatever attributes our limitation of thought may ascribe to him, he must exist and reign as the necessary ruler of the wondrous universe which he has created.

So far, astronomy seems to settle and confirm our religious creeds, in that we know there is a God. How does it affect our belief in the divinity of Christ? Can we still hold to our faith in the redemption and the great sacrifice? Or is that all a mere fiction of our egregious egotism?

Can it be that the only Son of God was cru-

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cified here on this least of worlds to save a handful of the inhabitants of the universe? Was this mere speck in creation chosen for this profound event? Dare we assume in our arrogant pride that we miserable sinners and infinitesimal atoms were alone singled out to be saved? Are there myriads of worlds which have no Saviour, while the worms on this dot of dust are redeemed by "Him Crucified"?

An answer to these questions may come from this consideration. This earth alone of all God's universe is in itself corrupt, errant, wicked, and demands redemption. All the rest of the great creation swings on its course with the "harmony of the spheres." Here only is the discord.

A great French poet has recently given us his conception of the universe, in his "Legend of the Earth." It begins:

When God the Father fashioned with his breath
The vasty void, which is his dwelling place,
He took upon his shoulders broad and strong
A wallet filled with all the stars of space.

And then follows the description of his "sowing":

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The Egotism of the Earth

Till heaps on heaps of orbs and planets filled
The utmost confines of eternity.
"Go," said the Lord, who sowed the deep with worlds,
"Go, stars, and shine throughout the spreading skies,
People the azure fields with your fair beams,
And sing to all your rhythmic harmonies."

* * * * * *

And as each orb rolled onward and appeared
A joybell ringing forth its holy glee,
The Almighty gazed upon his work and heard
With favor all creation's jubilee.
So when the Lord had flung out all the stars
And with soft beams the heavens were over-run,
He looked inside the wallet, where he found
Between two seams a broken piece of Sun.
He took the fragments in his wondrous palm,
And without question of its rightful place,
Breathed on it with the whirlwind of his mouth
And sent it reeling through the realms of space.

Then the poet tells how the great Creator heard "the vast hosannas of the spheres," and how, suddenly, amid the "glorious hymn," "a murmur came"—

It rose from out that bit of broken sphere,—
Yea, those vile creatures whom it bore away
Wept for the Mother Star they scarce could see
In their dull clime and in their sky so gray.

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The Egotism of the Earth

Then came to their complaints this gracious message:

"Stray particle of Sun whose name is Earth,
And ye that crawl," said God, "worms that ye are,
Sing, for I give you Death, yea, a new birth,
That ye may all regain yon brilliant Star."

Who shall say that this poet was not right? His conception seems a perfect one. All the knowledge of the astronomers tends to prove that the universe is true and perfect to infinity. We are the only flaw. This little earth is alone at fault. We poor, miserable, egotistical beings—we only of all God's creatures—need a Christ, a Saviour.

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Some Religious Helps to a Literary Style

ANY one in chase of a writer's rainbow, who seeks to find the pot of gold at its end, and would fain secure for himself that uncertain and indefinite prize known as a literary style, may perhaps discover herein some guide-posts to point him toward his way. If there is no royal road to learning, neither is there any short-cut; but it may be that the garb of thought and form and fashion of expression which characterize certain religious books may prove the longest way round and yet the shortest way home to the acquiring for our present uses of a purer, simpler, and more dignified language.

A child cannot run until it has learned to walk; no more can a man write until he has read. What then is the "reading, which maketh a full man," so that out of his very fullness of reading he shall express his ideas in a clear and limpid stream of thought? Surely this is not to be had from the current literature of the day.

This question has been asked concerning the

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present flood of books: "Is it not better that a hundred unnecessary volumes should be published, rather than that one that is good and useful should be lost?" Scriptural authority, if nothing else, would compel us to answer this in the affirmative, unless we stop to consider that the ninety-and-nine of the worthless books not only choke the single worthy one, but also tend to crowd out of life and usefulness the best books of the past.

The visible result of our over-production of books is that, because we are hopelessly unable to read everything, we read nothing. And we read nothing, absolutely, literally, so far as mental discipline is concerned, because the best of our average reading is in the better class of the magazines, and the worst of it—alas! for our habits—is in the newspapers. And this custom of our reading is not because of any lack of books among us, nor good books, moreover; for, as has been truly said, "Books are rarely destroyed. They go to the attic or the second-hand dealer, but for the most part they are preserved and accumulate rapidly." It has been estimated by good authority, that there are now in the United States 700,000,000 vol-

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umes, or about nine books *per capita*. In Europe the accumulation has been going on for centuries, and the total number of books for the whole world is figured at 3,200,000,000, or two books each for every inhabitant, old or young, wise or illiterate, heathen or Hottentot. And most of these are old books, and of them it is a faithful saying that "like proverbs, they receive their chief value from the stamp and esteem of ages, through which they have passed."

No "Doctor of Literature" could make a better prescription for the modern reader, suffering from periodical and current newspaper indigestion and dyspepsia, than to advise a course of tonical old books. This might begin with Montaigne and his quaint and pungent philosophy. It should include many of the good old formulas contained in that storehouse of learning, "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy." Passages from Young's "Night Thoughts" might be soothing, and bits of Rochefoucauld leave a gentle, pleasant bitter taste upon the tongue.

But of course the pharmacopœia is inexhaustible: let us consider a little more at length what benefits may come from the religious writers.

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Some Religious Helps

The "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis is the most popular religious work in Christendom; and fifty years ago it was a fact that, of all popular books, popular in the best sense, and widely spread in the fullest, it stood first. Dr. Johnson said of it that it had gone through more editions than there had been months since its publication, and the first edition was printed in 1472. "The priceless sentences of Thomas à Kempis," as Charles Kingsley called them, have been read in a Babel of sixty different languages, so often have they been translated. That its authorship is still in doubt, and as to whether Gers*e*n, Gers*o*n, or à Kempis wrote it matters no more than the spelling of Shakespeare's name. "Thousands upon thousands have forgotten their sorrows and dried their tears over its earnest pages," and hundreds of thousands have found in it rest for the soul and "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." George Eliot said of its contents that "they are inspired utterances, speaking to every soul and to every age."

But regardless altogether of the religious comfort which this book has given, and of its wonderful influence and power for good among

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Protestants and Roman Catholics alike, it is surely not read to-day as it was fifty years ago, and our literature is by so much the worse. In the current English translation of it the diction is musical, sonorous, terse, dignified, and expressive in every way, and no writing outside of the Bible is more beautifully pleading, plausible, and persuasive to sanctity.

There is another religious work much more important than the "Imitation of Christ," which is, if not religiously neglected, at least regrettably ignored by the literary student. This is "The Book of Common Prayer of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America." Of course this is essentially the same as the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, but to those who are familiar with the American form many of its beauties are enhanced by virtue of our very familiarity with them and by the softening of some early crudities in the English version. In Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations" some twenty-five or more passages from the Prayer Book are thought well-known enough to be included, as against *three* from Thomas à Kempis. The more honor to the Prayer Book!

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Of course the Episcopal forms for the Marriage Service and for the Burial of the Dead stand as accepted models of what may be best said on those occasions, and many phrases from them, as, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes," etc., or "To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse," etc., by their very strength of wording have become the common property of the English language.

The catechism, too, has many sentences most beautifully rounded, such as "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace."

But more particularly the Prayer Book is valuable to us because in its Psalter we find ready to our reading the most beautiful version of the Psalms. It is a conceded fact that the Psalms as they appear in King James' Bible are the more accurately translated and true to the original. But, as given in the Psalter, they are certainly more musical and rhythmical. They fairly read themselves, so easy is their flow, and so well balanced their refrain. There is good reason for this in that the Prayer Book's version was taken from Cranmer's Bible, which preceded the King James Bible; and the Psal-

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ter was musical because it was so intended,—intended to be sung and to take the place of the Latin chants. If any one be curious to compare the two renditions of the Psalms, let him read, probably the most familiar, the twenty-third, "The Lord is my shepherd," in the Prayer Book and the Bible, and say which pleases his sense of metre and rhythm the better. Other psalms, not quite so well remembered, will show the metrical difference even more markedly.

The collects of the Prayer Book are perhaps its most important literary feature. They are the perfect poetry of prayer. They may be called, almost, a humble supplication to the Deity in sonnet form. Though not limited in their number of lines, their mould is as fixed as that of a sonnet. They begin with an address to the Trinity or one of the Trinity, the supplication follows, and the conclusion, however addressed, is the invariable plea of Christ's intercession; and all this, however worded, is in one sentence.

Most of the collects are translations from the old Latin missals, but instead of losing in transition, the Anglicised forms have gained in

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grace and power of expression, and have all the sweetness of a benediction.

Like a string of beads blessed by the Pope, or indeed like a necklace of glorious pearls, have been strung around the Sundays, Saints' Days, and Holy Days of the Church a series of appropriate collects which are of inestimable literary value. If it may be permitted to quote but one of them as an example, it shall be that for the First Sunday in Advent, which was composed in 1549:

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever, Amen.

The collect for Ash Wednesday, with its familiar sentences of "new and contrite hearts," and "worthily lamenting our sins," is beautifully composed. It is of the time of the Reformation.

One more collect must be quoted in full,

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not only for its intrinsic merit and euphony, but because it serves well to introduce a most important subject. It is the collect for the Second Sunday in Advent, and was also written in 1549:

> Blessed Lord, who hath caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is to the Bible, then, to the Book of Books, that, we argue, we shall do well to come back; and we shall gain from the reading of it, if nothing else, a rich vocabulary, a terseness and strength of idiom, a graceful and poetic imagery and expression, and, withal, a simple and homely style of writing which will best tell any story or plead any cause. By its aid we may rise to the highest flights of eloquence or point to the sharpest our bluntest words.

Within a short time, there have appeared in the secular press many articles, and editorials, lamenting the neglect of Bible reading which has characterized the last three or four decades,

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and the unvarying opinion has been expressed that the English language of to-day is by so much the weaker and poorer. These articles all bespeak for the Bible renewed interest and re-reading, and, it is to be hoped, may help to awaken an interest in the subject.

This explanation may be offered in excuse for our lethargy. It would seem that many people now do not read the Bible naturally and familiarly as they used to do, for a hundred reasons of course, but for one in particular. They are afraid of it. If they believe in it, with the simple religious faith of old times, they are afraid of meeting in it strange passages which our modern religion has not yet taught them fully to understand, and concerning which they do not wish to be questioned lest they should not be able to give a reason for the faith that is in them. And those who *think* they do not believe in the Bible fear it and shun it lest they should be perverted or converted from their *imaginary* beliefs, or the lack of them. Yet surely a book so widely circulated and so universally owned deserves at least an occasional use. If it were only read in idle moments, as one picks up an old news-

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paper or magazine, the literary gain would be incalculable and the world roll round the better. "Don't be afraid of reading the Bible" is a text on which ten thousand editorials and sermons might be written.

One reason of the failure to appreciate the Bible as simply a book has been well put by Dr. Moulton. He says:

> The Bible has come down to us as the worst-printed book in the world. Not only modern literature, but even such as the literature of ancient Greece, if given out in modern times, will be printed in a manner which conveys the literary structure directly to the eye. If the work be a drama, the speeches are separated and the names of speakers inserted; if it be a poem, verse and line divisions will be made obvious; in essays or histories there will be at least titles and proper divisions into sections. But, though the Bible is proclaimed to be one of the world's great literatures, if we open our ordinary versions we find that the literary form is that of a scrap-book; a succession of numbered sentences, with divisions into longer or shorter chapters, under which all trace of dramatic, lyric, story, essay, is hopelessly lost.

It may be small wonder, then, that the casual reader misses much in his perusal of the Bible, or that he loses himself in its involved

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passages. But even in its current form, defective as it may be, it is perfectly safe for the most sceptical and ignorant of us to wander through its pages, and without regard to chapter, verse, or book, enjoy its everlasting beauties as we go.

Did not Macaulay record of Burke that before he delivered any of his masterly speeches he always read a chapter from Isaiah? If you will read Isaiah again, you will know why; and if you will read and re-read the sixty-six chapters through and through and learn to know them, you will have a command of language and the "open sesame" to a treasure-house of phrase and expression which you may plunder at your pleasure.

Macaulay certainly knew Isaiah, as his glorious poem of "Naseby" shows:

Oh! wherefore come ye forth in triumph from the North,
With your hands, and your feet, and your raiment all red?
And wherefore doth your rout send forth a joyous shout?
And whence be the grapes of the wine-press that ye tread?

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Oh! evil was the root, and bitter was the fruit,
And crimson was the juice of the vintage that we trod:
For we trampled on the throng of the haughty and the strong,
Who sate in the high places and slew the saints of God.

Compare this with the poem contained in the first six verses of the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah:

1. Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?—I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

2. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?

3. I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

4. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

5. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

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6. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

Certainly "Naseby" owes something of its spirit, its ring, and its very language to the old Hebrew poet.

What Hebrew poetry is may not be known to everybody. Our poetry is metrical only, as in blank verse, or metrical and rhythmical also, as in the usual poem, with the ends of the lines rhyming together in certain sequence. Poetry to the Hebrew mind, on the other hand, meant a rhyming of ideas and not of words, of thought and not of sounds. A thought is first expressed in one form, and then the same, or a similar thought, is repeated in another form. As, for example: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

But the Bible is also full of poetry as we consider it, rhyme, of course, being excepted. The last five verses of the twenty-fourth chapter of Proverbs, for instance, is, considered by itself, a beautiful sonnet on "Slothfulness," and, if not in the exact form of a sonnet, has at least all the spirit of one.

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The very first Psalm, as given in the Bible, has six verses, but as it reads in the Psalter it has seven. There are two lines to each verse in the Psalter version, and we thus have a perfect fourteen-line sonnet. Moreover, there is a full pause and break in the thought after the eighth line. The next four lines are distinct and separate, and the last two lines form a perfect and strong conclusion of the subject; all this in strict accordance with our rules for a sonnet to-day.

Lyrics and epics, of course, abound in the Bible, and Moulton calls "Solomon's Song" "the great honeymoon poem of universal literature."

In the Psalms may be found several chance examples of hexameters, as for instance:

God came | up with a | shout: our Lord with the | sound of a trumpet.

There is a | river the | flowing where | of shall | gladden the city.

Halle | lujah the | city of | God! Jehovah hath | blest her!

These also appear in the New Testament:

Art thou he | that should | come or | do we | look for another?

Husbands | love your | wives and | be not — bitter a | gainst them.

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The Apocrypha is by no means to be neglected by the reader. Ecclesiasticus alone would call for a longer thesis than this to consider some of its literary treasures, for it is a series of beautiful essays which few know. The panegyric on Doctors, of itself (chapter 38), if the profession knew it, would be well worth engraving on tablets of gold.

Perhaps one thing more than another which the reading of the Bible would help to teach us is the power of the short word. The English language is a language of small words, and the Saxon of it gives it its strength and its brevity of speech. The early writers, the "pure wells of English undefiled," are full of small words. The Bible naturally uses the same vigorous style. An example may be cited from what is considered one of the most magnificent passages in Holy Writ, that, namely, which describes the death of Sisera:

> At her feet he bowed, he fell: at her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; where he bowed, there he fell down dead, etc.

Again, there is the passage in Ezekiel, which Coleridge is said to have considered the most sublime in all the Scriptures, beginning:

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And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? and I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest, etc.

We may note also the grand passage which begins the Gospel of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word," etc., and including the terse sentence, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." In the first fourteen verses of this chapter there are twenty-eight polysyllables and two hundred and one monosyllables.

Briefly, therefore, it may be said that the short word is characteristic of the Bible, and proof of its strong, terse, good English.

In conclusion, this advice may be offered: Read a verse or a chapter, as you will, from the Bible, every night before you go to bed, as was the pious practice, well observed, of your forefathers. Choose Isaiah, choose the Psalms, or Proverbs, or Ecclesiastes; or choose by the old-fashioned simple hazard of thumb, if you please. But, read a little in the Bible! It cannot hurt you. You may sleep the sweeter for it, and gain a purer diction; and, Heaven help you! if you do not gain thereby a blessing and a benediction, too!

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Suicide and the Bible

FROM the time of the first great crime, when Cain slew his brother, all nations, tribes and peoples have held that the circumstances attending the taking of human life, and the reasons, motives, or provocation therefor greatly vary, and accordingly, in their laws, they have recognized degrees of homicide. They have differed, of course, as to what circumstances render the killing of another a crime to be punished or avenged, a misfortune to be condoned, or an act to be applauded and honored; but that the facts of each case should govern the judgment, and that the taking of another's life may or may not be criminal, has been the belief of all governments, civilized or savage, Christian or heathen, ancient or modern.

When the slayer and the slain are one and the same person, however, when it is suicide and not homicide that is in point, nations in general and moralists and philosophers in particular have differed widely in their views. A

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few modern Christian nations, among which are England and America, alone say that self-destruction is self-murder, and refuse to admit that there may be justifiable suicide as well as justifiable homicide.

The laws of England formerly punished the suicide by forfeiture of his property to the King and by his ignominious burial in the highway, with a stake driven through his body. Each wayfarer and passer-by thus trampled on his grave and so manifested his contempt for the impious act. And even to-day the established Church of England forbids that its beautiful burial service should be used over a suicide, and leaves him to be shoveled into his dishonored grave unwept, unhonored, and unsung. Nor is the Church of Rome less severe.

The Criminal Code of the State of New York has declared it "a grave public wrong" and has provided severe punishments for any unfortunate who unsuccessfully attempts it. And the laws of most of the states are similar in character. How different is this position from that which other peoples and other times have held, will appear from a glance at history in this regard.

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Among the Greeks suicide was not officially condemned, but on the contrary rather favored by some schools of philosophy. Cato, the younger, was a suicide. Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, after fifty-eight years of teaching, took his own life, and his disciples commended the act and upheld the practice in their doctrines. The Roman law did not forbid it, nor was it discountenanced by public opinion.

Among the Hindoos legalized suicide was formerly common, and is not unusual to-day. The custom of suttee, which compels the unfortunate widow to immolate herself on the funeral pile of her deceased husband in order to enjoy Paradise with him, and the bloody car of Juggernaut, whose wheels have rolled over thousands of benighted heathen,—both these forms of suicide are familiar to every reader and unfortunately still exist to some extent as recognized institutions. A sacrifice similar to the suttee has obtained among almost all tribes of savage Indians and Africans. A chief when he died needed credentials for his proper reception in the Spirit Land, and accordingly his wives, followers, and servants joined him in his death, that a proper

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retinue might accompany him to the "happy hunting grounds."

In China, with its hundreds of millions of people, the individual is but as a grain of sand on the sea shore, and life is accordingly held cheap. And in Japan, until recently, suicides were notably common and favored by official sanction. It is there that the ghastly custom of hara-kiri prevailed, which, being translated, means "the happy despatch." With all due ceremony, in manner prescribed and in a place chosen according to the rank of the performer, in the presence of his friends and relatives, the victim theatrically plunges the knife into his stomach, draws it across from left to right and then, with a prescribed and peculiar twist, pulls it out and trails it aloft. His courage is admirable; he neither wavers nor falters. No groan escapes him, but he stolidly disembowels himself in as matter-of-fact a way as one of us might have a tooth out.

Among modern Christian nations other than England and the United States, suicide is by no means generally and officially condemned. The penal code of France contains no legislation on the subject, nor the former codes of

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Bavaria and Saxony, and doubtless many of the other nations of Europe no more forbid it.

Certain it is that on the continent of Europe suicides are from three to ten-fold more common than they are in the British Isles, and that this is due to public opinion and not to poverty as a cause, is shown from the fact that of all the countries of Europe, Ireland has the smallest proportion.

It would seem, therefore, that the views of England and America concerning suicide not only differ from those of most other nations, but also are quite independent either of the times or of Christianity.

So far as religion supports their anomalous position, we would naturally look first to the Bible for instruction on the subject. Many writers,—De Quincey, Dr. Donne, Phil. Robinson and others—have intimated that the Scriptures nowhere forbid it. The ten commandments, of course, contain the elements and fundamental principles of our duty, and in them the lesser wrongs are necessarily forbidden with the greater. "Thou shalt do no suicide," therefore, might possibly be deemed included in "Thou shalt not kill," as lying

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is considered as forbidden under the head of bearing false witness. But when this commandment against killing is so far modified in the very next chapter of Exodus following the commandments (c. 21, v. 20) as to allow a man in those days, without blame, to kill his servant, who shall say how much the inhibition covered, or that suicide is forbidden by it? And elsewhere in the Bible we find no direct precepts against it. Several instances of self-destruction, however, are therein recorded, which it may prove of interest, briefly, to examine.

Abimelech (Judges, ch. 9) is the first suicide appearing upon the scriptural records. He became king by the wholesale murder of seventy of his father's brethren, and a few years thereafter received the punishment of his crimes at the hand of a woman. It was at the siege of Thebez, in a battle with his former co-conspirators, that "a certain woman cast a piece of millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to (i. e., quite) brake his skull." "Then he called hastily to the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, 'Draw thy sword and slay me, that men say not of me,

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a woman slew him.' And his young man thrust him through, and he died."

Very like to this is the record of Saul's suicide (I Samuel, ch. 31). In his war with the Philistines, when the battle had gone sore against him and the archers had hit him and he was sore wounded, he too called upon his armourbearer to draw his sword and thrust him through, lest, as he feared, the uncircumcised Philistines should come and thrust him through and abuse him (as they had done to Samson before him). Saul's armourbearer, however, feared to do so, so Saul himself took a sword and fell upon it. And when his armourbearer saw that Saul, his king, was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword and died with him.

Samson's suicide (Judges, ch. 16) happened shortly before Saul's, in his guerrilla warfare against his nation's enemies, these same uncircumcised Philistines. The circumstances of his death, however, are too familiar to call for repetition.

Now these several cases of self-destruction can hardly be called self-murder or suicide as we ordinarily use the term. All of them, ex-

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cept Samson's, occurred in the heat of battle with all its terrors and excitement, and, too, when each had already received his death blow, while Samson sacrificed himself to patriotism and the vengeance of his tribe upon its ancient enemies, quite as much as in revenge for his own personal wrongs and tortures. These instances, then, are scarcely in point and need no further consideration.

There remain but two cases of deliberate suicide recorded in the Bible, one in the Old Testament and one in the New. And singularly enough, in one of those parallelisms not uncommon to the Old and New Testaments (as Samson's birth, for instance, is so like to that of John the Baptist's), so both these suicides, Ahithophel and Judas, hanged themselves after betraying, the one his lord and king, and the other his Lord and Saviour — that same king's descendant.

Ahithophel (II Samuel, ch. 17), belying his name, which means the brother of foolishness, was David's first adviser, and esteemed so wise that his counsels were likened to the oracles of God. But in Absolom's conspiracy against David, Ahithophel, lured by what inducement

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Heaven only knows, renounced his king, and went over, heart and soul and brains, to Absolom. David's prayer, however, that Ahithophel's wisdom might be turned to foolishness in Absolom's cause, seems to have been answered. For, at a critical time, his shrewd advice and wise plans for the pursuit and overthrow of David, which would undoubtedly have insured the complete success of the great conspiracy, were disregarded and David escaped.

Then we are told that "when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass and got him home, to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself and died."

Here was self-murder, wilful, deliberate, premeditate, not forced upon the victim by pain and misery, not induced by a misguided sense of honor, nor hurried into by the rash impulse of the moment. It was prompted only by chagrin, disappointed ambition and wounded pride. Apparently no life was ever given in sacrifice to baser passions. It was such among suicides as the assassination of Lincoln was among murders.

And yet the inspired historian in Ahitho-

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phel's case goes on to make no comment on the crime; no word of condemnation follows. Indeed, we may almost infer approval of the act by his day and generation, since we find as the sole conclusion of the account that "he was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers." No ignominy apparently attached to his violent death.

Of the suicide of Judas there are two accounts given, seemingly quite inconsistent. St. Matthew briefly records that "he departed and went and hanged himself" (Matthew, ch. 27), while the version of St. Peter, in his speech to the disciples (Acts, ch. 1) is that "he fell headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out"—a most improbable, if not impossible, death.

The Scripture commentators, always ready to reconcile the most conflicting of Biblical statements, explain this by the assumption that Judas hanged himself on the edge of a precipice, that the rope must have broken, and the fall, with its horrible consequences, necessarily followed. It was a saying of Henry Ward Beecher's that the angels of heaven, knowing of course the real facts, read the com-

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mentaries for relaxation after their harp exercises. There is perhaps no better apology for this explanation.

DeQuincey's understanding of it is far more satisfactory. He reminds us that while we are wont to consider the heart as the seat of the affections and passions (for which there is no more anatomical reason than to ascribe the same spiritual influences to the liver or pancreas), the ancients, with nearer exactness, considered "the bowels" as the source and center of our feelings, and "bowels of compassion" is still a homely but accepted phrase with us to-day. Accordingly, DeQuincey views the language of St. Peter as entirely symbolical. "Falling headlong" is but descriptive of the utter ruin of his plans and hopes, and his breaking in two in the middle, so preposterous if taken literally, only expresses what we should have phrased the breaking of his heart.

But leaving any further discussion of a subject most interesting to the curious and earnest reader of the Scriptures, we have only to note here that for one who played so prominent a part in the Divine Tragedy, the record of Judas's suicide and the details of his death are

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most meager and unsatisfactory, and, as in Ahithophel's case, no comment or criticism is vouchsafed as to how his age and times viewed his voluntary death, or what estimate we are to put upon it. Peter denied his Lord—and wept; Judas, in his remorse, hanged himself. The one case, the commentators might tell us, was repentance; the other, despair. But the moral we are to draw has not been set out very clearly.

On the whole, then, it is not easy to prove that the Bible forbids suicide, or that it was discountenanced through all the years and area that its history covers. The contrary, indeed, is not a violent inference to draw from the Old Testament, since Ahithophel was apparently given customary and honored sepulture, instead of the ignominious and shameful burial which would have been his in England a century ago, or the disapproval which, in one way or another, silent or expressed, would doubtless have marked his funeral here to-day.

On the other hand, too, we might quote the Bible, almost from Genesis to Revelation, in proof that human life is but a vain thing, and that death is sweet and greatly to be desired. Does it not praise "the dead which are already

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dead, more than the living which are yet alive"? Is not the continual refrain of Job to the effect that "the day of one's death is better than the day of his birth"? Did not Ecclesiastes, Preacher and King, "turn himself to behold wisdom and madness and folly" that he might determine as to the value of life and whether it be truly worth living or no? And was it not the conclusion of so great a philosopher that it was all "a vanity and vexation of spirit"?

Can not most of us say with the readers of Rasselas, that "we have listened with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and have pursued with eagerness the phantoms of hope. We have expected that age would perform the promises of youth and that the deficiencies of the present day would be supplied by the morrow."

We have had all this fervent faith in life only to find that we have been cheated in our hopes; that its promises are but a delusion and a snare, and life itself but a vanity of vanities, as Ecclesiastes forewarned. And if it is so sore a burden, and death so sweet a rest, shall not we hail the welcome day and speed its coming? Can we not arrange for ourselves our "happy despatch"? 'Tis but the tie of a

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noose, the touch of a trigger, the tilt of a spoon. Why not?

The usual argument that suicide is only the resort of the coward, seems not good. The instinct of life is so strong within us all that while the thought of death is not unpleasant to us (as doubtless many of us have, more or less remotely, thought of suicide), the doing of the act, the actual killing of oneself, calls for a considerable amount of physical courage, of determination—"nerve." Who is it that is brave? He who suffers day after day with an aching tooth, or he who plucks up his spirit and goes straight to the dentist and has it out?

Again, why in summer, as statistics show, are suicides by drowning so much more common than in winter when suffering prevails far more? Only because in winter the water is cold, and the would-be suicide of faint heart is deterred by so slight an extra demand upon his courage.

No, moral courage may be denied the suicide, but, generally, he is no physical coward. The respect wherein he is a coward is in his fear for the future, his impatience of present sufferings, his want of faith in himself and in his kind, in God and in his neighbor.

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Suicide and the Bible

Here is an old argument: consider for a moment what the state of society would be were a law enacted allowing us to destroy anyone we considered useless, would not the latitude of the permission be absurd? And would there be any difference in granting us, under like conditions, the privilege to destroy ourselves? The weakness of the law would be in the inherent fallibility of human judgment. It cannot be left to any individual to determine as to the value of his life, for so many complicated circumstances enter into it to make up the sum of its worth to himself and to mankind in general—it is so crossed with the woof and warp of other lives, that the individual cannot safely judge as to when he has outlived his usefulness even to himself. It may be said generally that no one is useless unless he has lost the possibility (not probability) of recovering himself, and this would suppose such a complete state of utter destitution as cannot be predicated of anyone. It is so frequently true that the darkest hour is just before the dawn, and so invariably true that, with God, all things are possible.

Again, generally the suicide is first of all and

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above all, selfish. It is his own pains and aches and troubles and sorrows that he flees from, and in the shame and disgrace of his death he always makes somebody else to suffer that he may escape suffering. For no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. And however isolated and alone a man may live, and however friendless and undeserving he may deem himself, it can but rarely occur that he does not leave someone to mourn him, someone to miss him, or someone at least to inherit the disgrace which is the legacy of all suicides. And where there is a single creature whom we can comfort by our presence, aid by our counsels or relieve by our bounty—anyone whose lot without us would be one whit the harder, then can we claim no right selfishly to leave him to bear life's burden without us.

Though one may be doomed to die in poverty and pain, happy is he if, as he closes his eyes, he can bravely smile and say, with Saint Paul: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith."

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A Pretty Girl's Shoe

FEMININE fashions, from the time when Eve, or Adam, first introduced them, are always interesting. Since the original simplicity of costume, only two periods of modern civilization have dared to go back to the beginnings of things. They did it "under the Directory" in the last century, when, as may be paraphrased, a woman's clothes, like language, "were given her to conceal her thoughts," and they are venturing it in the present decade. The author of that clever story "The Invisible Man," might write a sequel about the "Visible Woman," or should she be called the "Disappearing Lady"? Time was when you could see her only at operas, balls and dinners, and even then you blushed for her. In bathing costume, oddly enough, the same girl blushes for herself. These days you can see her in the street cars, with all her transparencies and knots of narrow colored ribbons on a background of edgings, which a man has to

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steel himself not to look at. But she blushes not a whit. The Christian name of this girl should be one of the good old-fashioned ones like "Hope" or "Charity" or better yet,—"Faith." For she is certainly "the evidence of things unseen," if that is possible in optics.

However, the *mode* of nowadays has one great attraction. One of the prettiest features of a pretty woman,—her pretty foot,—was never more in evidence. Most of femininity wear for street dress their walking skirts, or golf, or rainy-day skirts, and what more do you want to see in tidy "shoon" and ankles? And even down town, in their summer mulls and muslins, there is a swish and a swirl, and a man need cross himself, or cross the street, to avoid observing all sorts of laces and "frillies" and most alluring hosiery. Doubtless the department stores are responsible for this. All those petticoated things which a man sees in their windows, and at which he twinkles his nose, must be sold to somebody, and when bought must be shown.

But, *apropos de bottes*, it was not long ago when a French shoe for woman was a coveted luxury. To-day the American woman's shoe

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leads the world, and is built on as graceful lines as a Cup Defender. Never did the "Columbia" show herself more trig and trim and saucy. The low shoe for women may be described generally as "distracting," and the adjective is used advisedly, as may appear. It glories in a high heel,—a military heel they call it, and you may have a Louis Quinze heel, or a modification thereof, if you please. This Louis did some dreadful things in history, but he realized the charm of a woman's foot and gave it a heel to add grace and height. Let the doctors and chiropodists talk as they please. What girl but would "take a little pains" to look like one of Watteau's maids? Alas! that with all her opportunities the girl of to-day may also buy a very ugly American shoe, and many girls do. It has an "extension sole," so-called, is of patent leather, and looks like a Staten Island ferryboat.

If you have seen a lady chicken, a big fat chicken, in September, say,— scurrying around in the grass after crickets, bugs, or golf balls, or anything she can catch,— you may notice that when she lifts her leg her toes bunch together and her foot is as slim and tidy as may

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be. When she puts it down, however, it spreads all over the lot like one of your goloshes, and the least you can do is to cry "shoo"! It is even so with the extension sole. When you see in front of you, on the avenue, a dainty dress and note the skirts and petticoats a-swirling and tossing and then see below a flat-footed monstrosity, splattering on the sidewalk, who wouldn't say "shoo" to that? Not more foolish is the ostrich who hides her head in the sand,—or any veil,—and leaves her splay feet exposed to view and criticism.

The winsome shop girl and the seemly typewriter know better. They have also developed tricks of tying the graceful low shoe with the military heels, which are worthy of encouragement. The notion was advocated years ago and now it is a fad. It is to be hoped that will not kill it, as died "those tassels on her boots," in the old song of many years ago:

> The style I'm sure it suits,
> The Boston girls they all wear curls
> And tassels on their boots.

To-day's device is simply that the larger the

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bow of ribbon on the instep the smaller the foot appears. It is very easy, and if you cannot afford to put in the best of silk braid, or will not take the trouble,—please, at least, cut off the tags from your cheap laces. It takes away that slovenly look. Even a man may profit by this suggestion, and seem more "fit."

There are other tricks in this trade also. For there is the girl in low shoes with red laces and with white laces. The practice is not to be commended and prevails only among the young and crude. They also tie these laces at the toe, wherein is a mystery.

Of course the pretty girl's shoe will come untied. That used to be part of the game. But the subterfuge is idle. It is easy to secure the bow absolutely with the "salmon knot." In the interest of young bachelors a description of that tie may well be omitted.

A few roguish girls have dared to wear with their white gowns, white stockings and a black low shoe. Venture it only if your feet are petite, and then "look out for squalls!" Where are the merry red shoes and red silk stockings of a decade or more ago? Someone sang of them:

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A Pretty Girl's Shoe

Hers are those dainty shoes, red as the rose,
Or white as lilies, or yet brown or tan,
Or bright deep yellow like the marigolds
That dot the dusty sidewalk till it blooms
And blossoms like a brilliant flower bed.

And where is the girl who dares to wear on a black shoe the riotous red heels of our grandmothers, which you may sometimes still see in shop windows? Can you not picture "Beatrix" clicking down the stairs on them? Or was it red rosettes she wore on her slippers? No, when DuMaurier pictured her in his illustrations to "Henry Esmond," she wore "scarlet stockings and white shoes." Her "wonderfulest little shoes with wonderful tall red heels" appear later in the story; also that she wore "silver clocked stockings," and again, that her "red stockings were changed for a pair of gray, and black shoes in which her feet looked to the full as pretty." Thackeray knew things about a woman's foot, you may be sure.

A newspaper item says that a prominent actress has braved the red heels and rejoices in them. It is to be hoped that they are not too high, and are carried with circumspection.

And speaking of ribbands, with a "d" in

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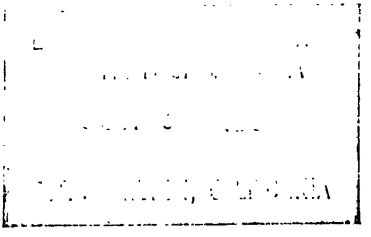
them—where is the demure girl, in black low shoes with black or white silk stockings, who dare lace her ribbands all up the ankle as in the days "under the Directory?" I blow a kiss to her, if I may make so bold.



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An Incident in Book Collecting

IT is no mark of distinction in these days to have books. It is as matter-of-course as the having of pots and pans and kettles in the kitchen. We buy our books as unconcernedly as our tea or tobacco. The quality of the article bought may vary with our purse or mood, but the habit of buying remains. In this age being a good citizen involves being a good book buyer.

But although now there be truly books for the million, and a library may be bought for a song at the dry goods stores, it does not follow that the college man and scholar, the man of parts and of letters, need fill his shelves in that vulgar way, or stoop to dip from the fountains of wisdom with a common dipper. For while to the plodding student, books may appear only as the tools of his craft or mere vehicles of knowledge, for him, later in the growth of culture, do books take on a lovable personality, and become animate with the soul of the author.

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And to him then is it given, no longer to buy books but to collect them. For the collecting of books is another matter, and calls for the exercise of some individuality of taste and peculiar bent of mind. You may buy books "in sets," but they are to be collected only piecemeal. You may buy them for their broad pages or showy bindings, but you will collect them, perhaps indeed with some regard to these qualities, but oftener for a mere title page or colophon, or the very simplicity of their first paper covers. The buying of them is merely an everyday incident. The collecting of them may be anything from a pastime to a purpose in life.

To differentiate again: between the book collector and the book lover, or bibliophile, there is a great gulf fixed, and into it must be cast many a trashy volume and many a one of gaudy and meretricious show before that gulf is filled, and the gap bridged over. Nor is one's right to the title of bibliophile a quality easily determinable. Who shall say when trees and shrubs lose their individuality and become an *arboretum?* or a number of evergreens attain to the dignity of being worthily called a collec-

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tion of *Conifers?* Even so, the honor of being classed as a bibliophile comes as it may, and goes, as it must, only at the bibliophile's death.

Bibliomania may be considered as the disease which its name indicates. Yet the progress of an individual from bibliophile to bibliomaniac is so gradual that it is only by comparison of the extreme stages that any marked characteristics appear.

The exaggerated and distorted love of books, however, disease though it be, is at least as refined an ailment as consumption, and as aristocratic a luxury as hay fever.

Now he who would be something more than a mere book buyer, yet hesitates to assume to himself the title of book lover; who would fain coquette with the bibliophile's mistress, and yet run no great risk of being bitten with a madness, let such an one choose the harmless pastime of collecting the works of some particular author in first editions. For this he need make no great pretense to literary knowledge, nor need he even claim to be a profound student and critic of his favorite. With the more truth that he call himself only an admirer of a writer of established repute, with the more grace may

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he avoid controversies and discussions over that writer's merits and demerits. So may he content himself with being on easy terms with a celebrity, and enjoy, vicariously, some small measure of his renown. To call the indulgence of such a taste, or the pursuit of such an enjoyment, a "fad" is doubtless to slander it. Let us consider it rather as a literary whimsy, like a fondness for sonnets, which in turn may be likened to a weakness for olives. Such tastes need no justification; they simply are.

Five or six years ago the casual reader of that fascinating class of literature, the English book catalogues, might have seen an occasional offering like the following:

"792. Stevenson (Robert Louis). Underwoods, FIRST EDITION, post 8vo, cloth, uncut, 7s. Chatto, 1887."

Some similar items perhaps followed.

Had this chance reader been at all so disposed he might have argued with good reason that no author at that time would better repay collecting than Stevenson. He would have been far wiser, it is true, who had bought his every published work years before, beginning with that little pamphlet, the veritable primer

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of Stevenson—"The Pentland Rising." But that would have been anticipating and not collecting. You cannot collect an author until he has published at least a goodly number of volumes. I choose my qualification of number advisedly, because its determinate value must necessarily be left to the judgment of the collector.

Up to the year 1889 there had been published some nineteen well-known volumes of Stevenson, covering almost every field of literature from history, through poetry, to romance. His coinage had been stamped *sterling* by the best critics, and given general circulation among the best readers. Whatever he had made was good, and the possibilities of his future work might enhance, but could not impair, the actual literary work of the past. Moreover, from the collector's point of view be it said, almost all of his works had appeared in one volume form. At that time, therefore, it was certainly safe to collect Stevenson; and strange enough, too, it was not too late. For even the English book dealers, ready as they are to create a new taste when they can no longer prick a jaded one, to advance the price of Caldicotts and Thomsons

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when you have got tired of Cruikshanks—even those keen English book dealers, I say, had hardly then thoroughly waked up to the value of Stevensons.

My first three or four volumes were bought from one of the catalogues that I happened to see, at modest prices enough; though it must be admitted that the prices of new acquisitions became "fancy" very quickly. But seven or eight volumes were soon secured at fair rates, and then I began to give some heed to my buying. Two or three of the volumes were certainly rather shabby looking, and what, in first innocence, I had looked upon as the hall-mark of a first edition, namely, an appearance of having been read not wisely but too well, began to appear as a considerable blemish, which not even the deft use of bread crumbs could efface. It was then that I learned that "uncut edges," in book catalogue parlance, and uncut wisdom teeth, in a book collector, might be more than merely an association of ideas; and that a book advertised only as "uncut" is quite different from one "unopened." Then also was I thoroughly taught—"for nothing refineth the young like experience"—that a volume de-

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scribed as a "library copy" is not one that you want for your own library. For the yellow label of Mudie or of Smith and the laying on of hands by their unsanctified patrons will have sadly desecrated that sorry volume.

But these were only small stumbling blocks in a pleasant pathway, and hardly gave me pause. This maxim, however, may be here noted for the benefit of others, that "he who would collect must also cull." A second-hand book, thoroughly bethumbed and dogs-eared is, like a dirty pack of cards, fit only for the fire.

My real trials of collecting began with "Edinburgh Notes." I had never happened upon even the small reprint of it, and was always sorely tantalized to see the advertisement, flaunted upon the first page of almost every new acquisition: "By the same author, An Inland Voyage, Edinburgh Notes," and the rest of the list. A copy must be speedily acquired. None were offered at any price in the catalogues, nor were any forthcoming in answer to correspondence with the various booksellers, and further discouragement ensued when a New York dealer said: "Why, if I had a copy of Edinburgh, I would build a col-

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lection around it." In despair, an advertisement in the Canadian papers was even ventured, although the mere whistling for it would have been cheaper and quite as ripe in results. But of course it came at last, thanks to an English bookdealer of the gentler sex, whose name shall be nameless only because advertising etiquette forbids. It must be admitted that, from a collector' s point of view, it was a sad disappointment; and, were it in line with the rules of the game (so to speak), I should own to a decided preference for the second and smaller edition. The first is but a reprint from "The Portfolio," and its clumsy form greatly mars the general symmetry of the other volumes as they are grouped upon the shelves. It is therefore generally condemned to go and stand in the corner like a gawky, misbehaved schoolboy; and one is inclined to banish with it "The Memoirs of Fleeming Jenkin"—I stay my hand at that only when I stop to think how highly he was esteemed by Stevenson. Far be it from me to impugn the literary value of these last named cumbrous volumes, but surely they consort sadly with that little post octavo, "The Dynamiter;" and the chance juxtapo-

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sition upon the shelf of "Jenkin" and "Jekyll," cheek by jowl, would be an incongruous one indeed.

About this period of collecting several items balked me. Doubtless because "Treasure Island" was so universally popular with all readers, was it difficult to secure a perfect copy; and that evil associations corrupt good manners —if ever so slightly—is proven by my "Travels with a Donkey." Happily no reproach may be cast upon my "Virginibus"; but "The Dynamiter" (otherwise absolutely unscathed), judging from the appearance of a graze in his back, narrowly escaped being hoist with his own petard. These were minor woes, however, and, like a tumble at football, only a part of the game.

After the finding of "Edinburgh," the most serious trouble arose when one of my English correspondents informed me of his discovery of "a large paper copy of 'Ticonderoga,' privately printed for the author in 1887," and bound in vellum. ("Ticonderoga," it is perhaps needless to say, was subsequently reprinted, and included in the volume of "Ballads," published in 1890.) This rarity I was told could

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be secured, at a price, if promptly cabled for. If that excellent book-finder should chance to read these lines, be it known to him that he is now fully absolved from the sin, with which I then charged him in my own mind, of inventing, instead of discovering, this book; for of course I secured it, and it was even as stated. But, having yielded to the allurements of one large paper copy, I fell an easy victim to others that were providentially discovered. "The New Arabian Nights," "Men and Books," "Memories and Portraits," "Underwoods" and "Father Damien" were all soon obtained in spotless white covers, and with margins broad and liberal to extravagance.

Of these volumes "Memories and Portraits" and "Underwoods" only seem to be veritable first editions. "Men and Books" bears an imprint dated six years later than the first ordinary issue, and "The Arabian Nights" only purports to be "a new edition." Whether it is quite fair for publishers to perplex and confuse the collector with new, large paper copies of old issues, it is perhaps a waste of time to consider; since, except for the seekers after first issues, the handsome Edinburgh edition will doubtless

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satisfy every reasonable desire of Stevenson's admirers, in the way of paper, margins, and clear, bright type.

The large paper copy of "Father Damien" is truly a beautiful book, printed throughout on vellum by Constable, and containing a fine portrait of its subject. This advertisement precedes the title page: "The following pages were originally given to the public in *The Scots Observer* of May 3 and May 10, 1890. On March 27, being two weeks later than the posting of the copy for the use of the *Observer*, the first edition, a pamphlet of 32 pages, printed at Sydney, N. S. W., was privately issued by the author in the way of presentation copies to his friends and acquaintances. This, the second edition, is limited to thirty copies, and is issued only to subscribers. The third edition, which is published simultaneously, is offered to the public." In this case it would seem that the second edition, which was practically simultaneous with the first, is decidedly preferable to the original rough pamphlet; unless one were fortunate enough to have received the latter from the author himself. Yet this same modest first edition, of which only twenty-five

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copies were printed, has recently been offered for sale for the equally modest sum of fifty dollars.

Hardly had my English correspondents finished with their discovery of large paper editions, than they began to rediscover, and took down from their dusty shelves, or drew from their dark hiding places, the forgotten publications which Stevenson had written in his youth. It was then that the "Pentland Rising" was snatched from oblivion. It was written when Stevenson was but a boy of sixteen, and published in 1866. This most unpretentious, little green-covered pamphlet, of only 22 pages—smaller even than the "Father Damien"—was sold, to those fortunate enough to have the chance to buy, for from five to ten pounds, according to the greed of the purchaser. Now, given a printer of only ordinary skill, in combination with a book dealer of ordinary carelessness, or—if you please, and if it may be—of extraordinary cupidity, and there appears no good reason why a farther supply of these two first editions, Damien and Pentland (limited to a reasonable number of course) should not be produced. 'Twere as easy as lying, it would

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seem; and as safe as flattery; while the profits would be very handsome. Let us pray, however, that as the cobbler should stick to his last, so may the counterfeiter confine himself to his graving tool; and let us fondly believe that no printer will ever be so corruptible, or book dealer so unduly avaricious. "The Pentland Rising" is, of course, of great interest and value to the lover of Stevenson, as showing the first windings of that stream of wondrous diction which later flowed so freely and fully from his pen. It is easy enough to prophesy backwards, but surely no one but the author of "Virginibus" would have so happily turned some of the sentences at the conclusion of that "page of history."

My next acquisition was even a more important one, being the four and only numbers of *The Edinburgh University Magazine*, issued in 1871, and happily preserved by one of his fellow students, "by sheer accident," as he writes. This publication was edited by Stevenson, with the aid of three fellow-students, he himself contributing more than his quota of its contents. He has given a full account of its happy birth, short lived career and sudden

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death, in the article entitled "A College Magazine," which appears in "Memories and Portraits"; and any admirer of his may rightly rejoice in the possession of these, his first published, serious, literary efforts. For, of course, "The Pentland Rising" was at best a mere boyish effusion. It is reported that Stevenson smiled gently—yet, one can imagine, with just a curl of irony in the corner of his mouth—when he first heard of the monetary value that had been put upon "The Pentland Rising." But it is also said that, a few years ago, he himself offered five pounds for a set of the magazine. His first-born weakling would seem to have been less dear to him than the child of his young manhood; and "Treasure Island" he appears to have regarded and cherished as the first offspring of his literary virility. Another item secured about the same time, was a collection of some twenty articles by Stevenson, taken from Fraser's, Cornhill and other magazines, between the years 1874 and 1881. Most of these subsequently appear in the collated volumes "Familiar Studies" and "Men and Portraits." But five of them, I believe, have never been reprinted, until in the "This-

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tle" edition: "The Story of a Lie," "On Style in Literature," "The Morality of the Profession of Letters," "On Fables in Song" and "The Day After To-morrow." It is hard to understand why any of these should have been denied the honor of a second publication in book form. "The Story of a Lie," which appeared in the *New Quarterly* for October, 1879, while it may not be the best of Stevenson's wonderful tales, has the self-same breezy spirit which gives life to them all, and is too good a story to go astray.

Magazine articles may perhaps be considered hardly fair game for the collector, yet some of these appear to be not only first, but exclusive issues; and many a contribution to literature so appearing may be lost to the world in general, and become as rare as if it had appeared only in an edition of fifty copies.

In the collecting of Stevensons, a question arises which is rather an embarrassing one for those not quite sure of the collector's code. It is as to the priority in edition, in such works as "The Wrong Box," and other subsequent volumes, which were apparently first published in the United States, and subsequently,

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though not simultaneously, issued in London. The advertisement quoted from "Father Damien" would seem to answer the question; yet so hard is it to overcome the collector's prejudice in favor of English books, that he who would err on the safe side, will do well to keep both editions, until the matter shall have been adjudicated by some one who may speak as one having authority and not as this humble scribe.

As compared with some other authors, the collecting of Stevensons has an especial charm. For while it is quite within the bounds of possibility, and the far-reaching powers of the book finders, to get together all of his published works, yet so many of them, comparatively speaking, were published in small editions, or privately, or in perishable form, or for purposes of copyright only, that one person alone may hardly hope to secure a complete collection of his published writings. Nevertheless the alluring possibility of so doing remains to the zealous, as witness the appearance of "Father Damien" in New York, already referred to. And, at all events, the chasing of this enticing rainbow will have

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proved as pure a joy and as innocent a recreation as Izaak Walton ever found in his gentle art.

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